

Little Dixie Lake Conservation Area

Ten-Year Area Management Plan FY 2015-2024




Wildlife Division Chief


Date

Little Dixie Lake Conservation Area Management Plan Approval Page

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OVERVIEW

- **Official Area Name:** Little Dixie Lake Conservation Area, # 5904
- **Year of Initial Acquisition:** Initial land purchase occurred in 1957 when local sponsors acquired 448 acres and deeded these lands to the Missouri Department of Conservation. Little Dixie Lake was created in 1958 with the damming of Owl Creek.
- **Acreage:** 733 acres
- **County:** Callaway
- **Division with Administrative Responsibility:** Wildlife
- **Division with Maintenance Responsibility:** Wildlife
- **Statement of Purpose:**

A. Strategic Direction

Manage a quality sport fishery in Little Dixie Lake Conservation Area (CA). Provide research ponds and facilities for aquatic research. Provide facilities and infrastructure that invite public use. Manage forest, woodland and grassland resources that provide compatible public use.

B. Desired Future Condition

The desired future condition is quality forests and woodlands, healthy diverse grasslands, a productive sport fishery, additional ponds and facilities dedicated to aquatic research, fewer invasive species and infrastructure that is inviting to the public.

C. Federal Aid Statement

N/A

GENERAL INFORMATION AND CONDITIONS

I. Special Considerations

A. **Priority Areas:** None

B. **Natural Areas:** None

II. Important Natural Features and Resources

A. **Species of Conservation Concern:** None observed.

B. **Caves:** None

C. **Springs:** None

Other: Occurs in the Claypan Till Plains Land Type Association. This land type features well-developed claypan soils on a flat glacial till plain. The landscape was formerly prairie with flat or gently rolling topography and narrow belts of timber along the stream drainages (Nigh & Schroeder, 2002).

III. Existing Infrastructure

- headquarters building (containing three garage bays, workshop, storage room, bathroom and office)
- two-car garage
- storage building
- 205-acre lake – Little Dixie Lake
- 22 half--acre research ponds with inlet and outlet structures
- 26 ponds (6 fishing ponds, 20 fishless ponds)
- 5 privies, Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) accessible
- 1 boat dock
- 1 fishing dock (ADA accessible)
- 1 concrete boat ramp
- 9 fishing jetties (ADA accessible)
- 5 parking lots (ADA accessible, 2 gravel lots with concrete pads)
- 1 pavilion #3683 (ADA accessible)
- 15 picnic tables (ADA accessible)
- 7 barbecue grills
- 24 boats for rent (available seasonally)
- 1 observation deck
- 0.4 mile trail - Dixie Woods Trail (ADA accessible asphalt pavement, 1 foot bridge)
- 4.5 mile trail - Shoreline Trail (22 footbridges)
- 6.0 mile trail - Boundary Trail
- 1 dry hydrant near boat ramp for Fire Department use

IV. Area Restrictions or Limitations

A. Deed Restrictions or Ownership Considerations: None

B. Federal Interest: Federal funds (Dingell-Johnson Sport Fish Restoration funds) were used in the development of this area, or a portion thereof. The Department must maintain the developed project throughout its useful life. Federal funds may also be used in the management of this land. Fish and wildlife agencies may not allow recreational activities and related facilities that would interfere with the purpose for which the State is managing the land. Other uses may be acceptable and must be assessed in each specific situation.

C. Easements: There is a highway road easement 50 feet wide located adjacent to State Routes J and RA. Electric, telephone, and water service lines and easements are located along the area boundary with Routes J, RA and County Road 228. A main water line valve is located near the welcome sign at the main entrance to the area. No other easements are known to exist.

D. Cultural Resource Findings: No known cultural resources.

E. Hazards and Hazardous Materials: None observed.

F. Endangered Species: None observed.

G. Boundary Issues: Establishing accurate and identifiable boundary markers is a priority for this area.

MANAGEMENT CONSIDERATIONS

V. Terrestrial Resource Management Considerations

Little Dixie Lake CA contains approximately 263 acres of forest and woodlands, 200 acres of grasslands and 50 acres of old field. The timber is of good size and varying quality, but its true value is its protection of the watershed and the aesthetic quality it provides along the hiking trails. Prescribed fire is used to manage some of the woodlands.

The stands of native grasses and forbs are almost entirely the result of conversion from fescue pastures. However, small acreages of remnant native grasses remain present on the west side of the lake. Fire is used to manage the grasslands. Native forbs have been interseeded to increase diversity. Seed collection by private contractors has been a common practice. Invasive species are present in the grasslands and are addressed annually. Conducting prescribed burns poses challenges and limits the conditions/times that burns can be conducted due to the close proximity of neighboring properties.

The old field acres are generally of poor quality with infestations of autumn olive, bush honeysuckle, and sericea lespedeza.

Challenges and Opportunities:

- 1) Manage diverse grasslands and remove invasive species.
- 2) Implement forest management.
- 3) Improve quality of old field habitats.

Management Objective 1: Manage diverse grasslands and remove invasive species.

Strategy 1: Use prescribed fire to stimulate the growth of native forbs and grasses (Wildlife).

Strategy 2: Monitor grasslands for invasive species and treat infestations with herbicides or cutting (Wildlife).

Strategy 3: Overseed native forbs into fields to increase plant diversity (Wildlife).

Strategy 4: Use contractors to harvest seeds for planting (Wildlife).

Strategy 5: Mechanically remove unwanted trees and shrubs (Wildlife).

Management Objective 2: Maintain healthy forests and woodlands with management emphasis on watershed protection.

Strategy 1: Monitor forests and woodlands for invasive species, diseases and insects. Suppress any infestations that may develop (Forestry).

Strategy 2: Retain and protect existing den trees (Forestry).

Strategy 3: Use selective thinning and prescribed fire to manage woodland acres (Wildlife).

Strategy 4: Retain wooded stream corridors to protect water quality, per the Department's stream management guidelines (2009) (Forestry).

Strategy 5: Conduct a forest inventory (scheduled for FY21) (Forestry).

Management Objective 3: Manage old field acres.

Strategy 1: Monitor old fields for invasive species and treat infestations with herbicide or by cutting (Wildlife).

Strategy 2: Use prescribed fire to maintain open fields (Wildlife).

VI. Aquatic Resource Considerations

The 205-acre Little Dixie Lake provides fishing opportunities for crappie, bass, bluegill, sunfish and catfish. Rental boats are available from April 15 to Oct. 15; and outboard motors in excess of 10 hp must be operated at a no-wake speed. Trails are maintained to provide easy access to shoreline locations and sunken evergreen trees provide fish habitat in the lake. Six ponds provide fishing opportunities. Another 20 ponds are fishless and help provide protection from siltation runoff into Little Dixie Lake. Owl Creek is the principle stream on the area; it flows into and out of Little Dixie Lake. In addition, 22 half-acre ponds (below the dam) are used for aquatic research.

Challenges and Opportunities:

- 1) Manage fish populations in Little Dixie Lake.
- 2) Manage area ponds.
- 3) Enhance diversity and quality of aquatic resources.
- 4) Provide the public with information concerning Little Dixie's aquatic resources.
- 5) Protect water quality and habitat in streams.
- 6) Maintain the research ponds and facilities.

Management Objective 1: Manage fish populations in Little Dixie Lake.

Strategy 1: Annually conduct spring electrofishing and fall trap-netting to monitor the populations of largemouth bass, crappie, bluegill and redear sunfish, as required for a Priority 1 impoundment such as Little Dixie Lake (Fisheries).

Strategy 2: Conduct hoop-netting for catfish every three years. Sample other species, i.e., lake sturgeon and paddlefish, as needed (Fisheries).

Strategy 3: Maintain current creel and length limits unless desired population indices aren't met for three consecutive years (Fisheries).

Management Objective 2: Manage area ponds.

Strategy 1: Conduct electrofish sampling in fishing ponds every three years, as required for Priority 3 impoundments (Fisheries).

Strategy 2: Monitor and develop management strategies for ponds capable of maintaining a sport fishery (Fisheries).

Strategy 3: Maintain fishless ponds to provide habitat for reptiles and amphibians (Fisheries).

Management Objective 3: Manage all aquatic resources to enhance diversity and quality.

Strategy 1: Enhance aquatic habitat by establishing desirable aquatic vegetation; removing undesirable vegetation; adding hard cover for fish, reptiles and amphibians; reducing siltation and maintaining good water quality (Fisheries).

Strategy 2: Annually construct fish attractors using hardwoods, red cedar or recycled Christmas trees (Fisheries).

Strategy 3: Annually survey aquatic plant coverage, density and species composition (Fisheries).

Strategy 4: Maintain aquatic vegetation between 20 to 30 percent of Little Dixie Lake's total surface area (Fisheries).

Strategy 5: Remove vegetation from selected bank fishing locations as needed (Fisheries).

Management Objective 4: Provide information to the public concerning Little Dixie's aquatic resources.

Strategy 1: Develop and maintain signs and displays that explain fishing regulations and management efforts (Fisheries).

Strategy 2: Maintain lake sturgeon information signs at all current signing locations (Fisheries).

Strategy 3: Distribute information via the statewide fishing report, Department publications, local newspapers and electronic media (Fisheries).

Management Objective 5: Protect water quality and habitat in streams.

Strategy 1: Maintain riparian corridors, enhance watershed management, improve in-stream habitat, and reduce streambank erosion throughout the area (Fisheries).

Strategy 2: Plan future facilities so they have minimal impact on streams and riparian corridors (Fisheries).

Strategy 3: Implement management strategies for streams with erosion problems (Fisheries).

Management Objective 6: Maintain the research ponds and facilities.

Strategy 1: Maintain fencing to prohibit public access to the research ponds (Wildlife).

Strategy 2: Maintain the research area to reflect the appearance and functional level commensurate with other conservation areas (Wildlife).

VII. Public Use Management Considerations

Challenges and Opportunities:

- 1) Maintain the area's use for the public. Little Dixie Lake CA receives considerable use from anglers, boaters, hikers and birders.

Management Objective 1: Maintain facilities that are safe and inviting to the public.

Strategy 1: The Region's east-side mowing crew will maintain facilities from April through October; Columbia District staff will provide maintenance through the winter months (Wildlife).

Strategy 2: Make repairs so that at least 10 rental boats are in service from April 15 to Oct. 15 (Wildlife).

Strategy 3: Check hiking trail conditions throughout the year. Plan workdays to repair flood damage, clear blow-downs, trim vegetation and post signs (Wildlife).

Strategy 4: Maintain the privies, jetty and boat dock in a clean and usable manner (Wildlife).

Strategy 5: Refill rock at end of boat ramp, as needed (Wildlife).

VIII. Administrative Considerations

Challenges and Opportunities:

- 1) The area gets a great deal of public use and can be, at times, a challenge to maintain since there are no permanent staff offices at the area.
- 2) The shallow cove makes the boat ramp difficult to use when the lake is low.
- 3) Rental boats are often not returned to their place of origin.
- 4) Collection of rental boat fees.
- 5) Land acquisition.

Management Objective 1: Provide a level of customer service that is acceptable to the public.

Strategy 1: East-side mowing crew will be primary contacts April through October (Wildlife).

Strategy 2: Columbia District staff will be primary contacts November through March (Wildlife).

Management Objective 2: Provide a boat ramp that is usable when the lake is low.

Strategy 1: Explore potential for building a replacement boat ramp in a different location (Design and Development).

Management Objective 3: Provide boats at the rental station.

Strategy 1: District staff will retrieve and maintain rental boats at least twice weekly (Wildlife).

Strategy 2: District staff will repair rental boats as needed (Wildlife).

Management Objective 4: Collect boat rental fees.

Strategy 1: Callaway County Conservation Agent(s) are responsible for enforcing boat rentals and fee collection (Protection).

Lands Proposed for Acquisition:

When available, adjacent land may be considered for acquisition from willing sellers. Tracts that improve area access, protect water quality, provide public recreational opportunities, contain unique natural communities or species of conservation concern, or meet other Department priorities, as identified in the annual Department land acquisition priorities, may be considered (Wildlife).

MANAGEMENT TIMETABLE

Strategies are considered ongoing unless listed in the following table.

	FY15	FY16	FY17	FY18	FY19	FY20	FY21	FY22	FY23	FY24
Terrestrial Resources Management										
<i>Objective 2</i>										
Strategy 5							X			
Aquatic Resources Management										
<i>Objective 1</i>										
Strategy 2		X			X			X		
<i>Objective 2</i>										
Strategy 1		X			X			X		

APPENDICES

Area Background:

Little Dixie Lake CA is located near the southern edge of the Glaciated Plains region of northern Missouri. The area historically contained a mix of prairie and forest. Most of the site likely supported a forest cover of varying density. The more upland sites were probably a savanna with widely spaced oaks and a prairie-like ground cover.

The Little Dixie Lake name is rooted in history going back to the early 1800s when Daniel Boone established a path from St. Charles County to the salt licks of Howard County. A wagon road was established over Boone's path and it became known as the Booneslick Trail. This historic trail passed through Millersburg within one-eighth of a mile of the conservation area. Immigrants, primarily from Kentucky, Tennessee and Virginia, found lands rich in natural resources and the promise of greater prosperity along the trail route. These settlers brought with them the political, cultural, and economic ties to their original homes below the Mason-Dixon Line. The region, including Callaway County, was referred to as "Little Dixie" in recognition of its southern heritage.

In 1957, local private sponsors purchased 448.1 acres and deeded these lands to the Department. In 1970, an additional 21 acres were purchased. The Department sold 1.1 acres to the Millersburg Fire Protection District in 1981. In 1992, 156 acres were purchased from the Arends family, and the 110-acre Meredith Tract was acquired in 1996.

Little Dixie Lake

Aquatic resources comprise nearly 30 percent of the Little Dixie Lake CA. The largest single feature on the area is 205-acre Little Dixie Lake. In 1957, local private sponsors purchased land and donated 448 acres to the Department to provide "land for a lake site north of Millersburg, Missouri, which is to be used and developed by the Missouri Conservation Commission for public purposes" with "the main objective of Little Dixie Lake being to provide a place where the public can fish without disturbance from those practicing other types of water recreation." Little Dixie Lake's construction was completed in 1958 by the Department with the impounding of Owl Creek. Little Dixie Lake has 5.5 miles of shoreline, a volume of 1,845 acre-feet, maximum depth of 28 feet and mean depth of 9 feet (Figure 1). Forty-two percent of the lake's surface area is within the littoral zone (≤ 8 feet of depth at full pool). This impoundment is the largest public lake within a 40-mile radius of the city of Columbia.

Numerous trees were left standing or placed in large piles throughout the lake basin during construction. Much of this habitat remains as stumps and logs. Since 1984, thousands of trees have been placed in the lake to create or maintain brush piles for fish attractors and habitat. Popular bank fishing areas that lacked fish-attracting habitat were enhanced by placing used

Christmas trees, red cedars and hardwood trees within casting distance of the shoreline at 35 locations.

Little Dixie Lake opened to the public for fishing in 1960 with no mandatory fishing regulations. As a result, approximately 50 percent of the largemouth bass population was harvested in the first four days the lake was open to fishing. Over 3,700 bass were harvested in just the first two days of fishing. This excessive harvest of bass nearly destroyed the lake's fishery. It took 10 years of intensive management using various techniques, including fishing regulation changes, to restore balance to Little Dixie Lake's bass population and fishery.

Little Dixie Lake maintains viable fisheries for largemouth bass, white crappie, bluegill, redear sunfish, channel catfish and blue catfish. There have been 25 species of fish stocked into the lake at one time or another since it was opened to fishing; most of these species were "leftovers" from projects done in the Fisheries research ponds below Little Dixie Lake's dam. During 2011 and 2012 fish sampling, there were 19 species captured including largemouth bass, bluegill, redear sunfish, white crappie, black crappie, green sunfish, common carp, channel catfish, blue catfish, lake sturgeon, paddlefish, gizzard shad, fathead minnow, brook silverside, hybrid sunfish (green sunfish x bluegill), grass carp, black bullhead, yellow bullhead and golden shiner. Lake sturgeon, state listed endangered, were originally stocked in the lake in 1984 and some of these fish have now reached 75 to 85 pounds in size. Some of the paddlefish sampled in 2012 ranged from 125 to 145 pounds. The lake currently supports a stockpiled bass population that is dominated by too many small bass ($\leq 12''$). However, there are still good numbers of larger bass up to 10 pounds and a high density of larger bluegill averaging around 8''. There is also a very good channel catfish and blue catfish population in the lake with most fish averaging between 18'' to 24''. Anglers have reported catching large blue catfish up to 60 pounds.

The lake has had periodic problems with muddiness and/or aquatic vegetation since its construction. To curb autochthonous turbidity, 27 percent of the lake's eroding shoreline was covered with large rock (riprap in the mid-1970s. Nearly the entire lake shoreline is now stabilized with riprap or natural vegetation. Eurasian water milfoil has periodically become overly abundant in Little Dixie Lake, but it has been successfully controlled with the introduction of grass carp and spot-treatment with aquatic herbicides. Over the last few years American lotus has become established in the lake, but has been controlled with herbicide applications. In an effort to establish more desirable aquatic vegetation in the lake, water willow, arrowhead, square-stem spike rush, and pink fragrant water lily were transplanted in 1995. Water willow has become well established and is providing good fish habitat and excellent shoreline erosion protection. Other aquatic plants that have been observed at the lake include water primrose, coontail, leafy pondweed, American pondweed, pickerel weed, thalia, sweet flag, cattails, southern naiad, water smartweed, filamentous algae, bluegreen algae, duckweed, watermeal, rose mallow, wild iris and buttonbush.

Most of the angling is done from boats; outboard motors in excess of 10 hp must be operated at a no-wake speed. Considerable bank fishing also occurs along the dam, jetties, boat ramp and fishing dock; and around the east and northwest parking lots. The fishing regulations at the lake are statewide regulations. These regulations include a 12" to 15" slot length limit for largemouth bass, and daily creel limits for bass of 6; channel catfish, blue catfish, flathead catfish of 4 in the aggregate; crappie of 30, and all other fish of 20 in the aggregate.

Research Ponds

In 1960, 22 rectangular, half-acre ponds were constructed immediately below the base of Little Dixie Lake's dam along Owl Creek. These ponds were built specifically for aquatic research. Each pond has a mean depth of approximately 4 feet and a maximum depth of 8 feet. The water levels of each pond can be adjusted independently of the others via a series of pipes and valves from the lake. The ponds are drained via pipes and valves into a channelized section of Owl Creek. The research pond complex is fenced and gated and public access is restricted.

The Department research pond studies have provided valuable information on pond stocking rates and combinations, aquatic vegetation control, effects of pesticides in aquatic environments, intra and interspecific fish competition, tag retention in fish, and other aquatic research oriented projects. The ponds have also been used to culture muskellunge, smallmouth bass, lake sturgeon and other fish utilized in fisheries research and management efforts. This facility has and continues to prove valuable as a site for important research studies that assist biologists with the management of the State's aquatic resources.

Area Ponds

In 1960, there were nine small fishless ponds on the area totaling 0.4 acres of water. Seven of these ponds were constructed primarily for erosion control. The other two ponds function as the primary and secondary sewage treatment lagoons for the area. An additional six small ponds were constructed in 1987. In 1989, five more ponds were built. To date, there are a total of 20 fishless ponds totaling 1.0 acres of water on the area (Figure 2). The fishless ponds on the area range in size from 0.01 to 0.15 acres with a mean surface acreage of about 0.05 acres. Maximum pond depths range from 1.0 to 8.5 feet with a mean maximum depth of 3.5 feet. Seven of the ponds are surrounded by old field habitat, eight by woodlands, and the remaining five are within the grassland habitat. Approximately 95 percent of the area's terrestrial resource is within 0.25 miles of a pond. Only 25 acres of Little Dixie Lake Conservation Area is more than 0.25 miles from fishless water.

Several ponds contain unusual or rare plant species. One pond has a thriving population of *Thalia*, a rare plant of the southeast lowlands of Missouri. This is the farthest north in Missouri where this plant is known to survive. Other unusual or showy plants found in some of the ponds

are bladderwort, copper iris, southern blue flag, fragrant water lily (both pink and white blooming), pickerel weed and common reed.

Although many species of mammals, birds and reptiles are occasional to frequent visitors to the ponds, insects and amphibians are the primary users and residents of the ponds. Some common amphibians that utilize the ponds are American toads, central newts, smallmouth salamanders, chorus frogs, cricket frogs, leopard frogs and bullfrogs. Less common or unusual amphibians include crayfish frogs, and spotted and tiger salamanders.

Several of the circa 1960 ponds received plant introductions in the mid-1970s. More intensive management of the ponds started concurrently with the construction of the new ponds in 1987. Aquatic vegetation such as bladderwort, pickerel weed, water lilies and arrowhead were introduced into the new ponds. Cottonwood and bald cypress saplings were planted around the shorelines of many of these new ponds. Hardwood logs and limbs were placed along the shoreline of the new ponds so that half of the woody material is submerged with the remaining above the waterline on the shore. Salamander eggs and larvae have been transferred from ponds with existing populations to newly constructed ponds.

There are also six larger ponds on the area that have bass and bluegill present. These ponds range in size from 0.3 to 2.0 acres and total 4.3 acres. The largest is General Lee's Pond on the north end of the area which has a fishery containing bass, bluegill, channel catfish and green sunfish. The rest of the fishing ponds only have fair fisheries due to their small size and heavy fishing pressure. Combined, there are 26 ponds on the area which total 5.3 acres (Table 1).

Streams

There are seven small intermittent streams on the area, totalling approximately 1.7 miles. These streams, which are on the southeastern margin of the Dissected Till Plains Physiographic Region, originate on level uplands underlain by shales and descend into rolling to hilly terrain underlain by limestone. All streams on the area have relatively good riparian corridors. There are four first-order (all 0.1 mile in length), two second-order (0.3 and 0.5 miles), and one third-order (Owl Creek, 0.5 miles) streams on the area. Owl Creek is a third-order tributary of Cedar Creek and is the principle aquatic stream resource on the area. Owl Creek has an average gradient of 18.3 feet per mile. Prior to the construction of the Little Dixie Lake and the Fisheries research pond complex, Owl Creek was primarily an intermittent stream. However, since the research pond complex has been in operation, water releases from the ponds and holding tanks have provided some flow in Owl Creek below the dam during most of the year.

The 2,200-acre watershed of Little Dixie Lake lies primarily to the northeast of the lake. Except for approximately 70 acres below the lake's dam, all of the Little Dixie Lake CA drains into the lake. Land use patterns in the lake's watershed are similar to many other conservation areas in

the northern part of the state. Approximately 25 percent of the watershed is in private row-crop production. Twenty-nine percent of the watershed is in private pasture and haylands. Only 2 percent of the private lands in the watershed are forested. Six percent of the watershed is used for residential purposes or public roads. Approximately, 25 percent of the remaining watershed is located within the conservation area.

There is little available information regarding the area streams or the aquatic fauna they support primarily because of their intermittent nature. Fish populations exist in Owl Creek below Little Dixie Lake's dam due to increased flow primarily from the research ponds and holding tanks. This section of stream contains fish biota typical of a prairie, lower Missouri River headwater stream. Additional fish are periodically introduced into this stream via emigration from the lake and from the research ponds during draining and harvest operations. Fish sampling by Department fisheries biologists in nearby Cedar Creek have yielded species such as creek chub, common shiner, red shiner, Western redbfin shiner, golden shiner, sand shiner, ghost shiner, fathead minnow, bluntnose minnow, suckermouth minnow, blackstripe topminnow, northern orangethroat darter, johnny darter, striped fantail darter, western mosquitofish, Ozark logperch, brook silverside, white sucker, central stoneroller, slender madtom, redear sunfish, longear sunfish, bluegill, green sunfish, hybrid sunfish (green sunfish x bluegill), golden redhorse, chestnut lamprey, black bullhead, yellow bullhead, channel catfish, common carp, smallmouth bass, white crappie, black crappie, spotted bass, largemouth bass and walleye. Other fish species found near the confluence of Owl Creek and Cedar Creek having Missouri River influence include western silvery minnow, emerald shiner, gizzard shad, smallmouth buffalo, bigmouth buffalo, black buffalo, longnose gar, shortnose gar, shorthead redhorse, quillback, river carpsucker, freshwater drum, white bass and walleye. No threatened or endangered species have been collected on any of the area streams in recent surveys.

Regulations

Statewide fishing regulations apply. See Department regulation code book or regulations posted on the Web at <http://www.sos.mo.gov/adrules/csr/current/3csr/3c10-11> or <http://www.sos.mo.gov/adrules/csr/current/3csr/3c10-12>. Any exceptions to these regulations will be posted by sign on the area.

Angler Use

Anglers are the largest single user group on the Little Dixie Lake Conservation Area. While conducting creel surveys in the 1980s, the Department found that anglers made an average of over 21,000 fishing trips to the area from April through October. The highest recorded total trips to Little Dixie was recorded in 1987 when the public made 129,000 trips. From 1973 to 1991, total public use increased on average 5.3 percent per year. It is estimated that since Little Dixie Lake CA opened in 1960, the Area has hosted over 5 million trips. Fishing pressure at the lake

averaged 242 hours/acre in the early 1990s, which compares to 45 hours/acre on Lake of the Ozarks. At present, the lake continues to receive heavy fishing pressure.

Current Land and Water Types

Land/Water Type	Acres	Miles	% of Area
Forest	248		34
Grassland	210		29
Lake	205		28
Old Field	40		5
Research Ponds	20		3
Infrastructure	10		1
Total	733		100
Stream Frontage		2	

Public Input Summary:

The draft Little Dixie Lake Conservation Area Management Plan was available for a public comment period February 1–28, 2015. The Missouri Department of Conservation received comments from 16 respondents (Appendix A). The Little Dixie Lake Conservation Area Planning Team carefully reviewed and considered these ideas as they finalized this document. A brief summary of public input themes, including how they were incorporated or why they were not, can be found below. Rather than respond to each individual comment, comments are grouped into general themes and are addressed collectively.

Department responses to themes and issues identified through Little Dixie Lake Conservation Area public comment period

Terrestrial Resource Management

Suggests adding food plots (milo) for quail hunting.

We agree that this would be a nice addition to the area; however, we do not reliably have farming equipment on the area and our ability to install and maintain food plots would not be consistent from year to year. Frequently, the Department uses private farmers through mutually agreed upon Agricultural Crop permits to accomplish some food plot installation but Little Dixie does not have enough acres available for these farming and food plot practices to be an attractive location.

Supports removal of invasive plant species (fescue and sericea lespedeza).

We do some invasive species control on the area including: fescue, sericea lespedeza, autumn olive and bush honeysuckle. These species are firmly established on the area and on private lands in the surrounding landscape. We will continue to make efforts to keep them contained.

Suggests more native wildflowers and less grass in area grasslands.

We intend to diversify some of the native grasslands on the area through time. Native wildflowers are expensive and are best interseeded following management activities such as summer burns which can help create growing space for the flowers to establish with the grasses.

Supports prescribed burns on the area. Wonders when the next prescribed burn is planned for north of the CR 246 parking lot.

Prescribed burning seasons are difficult to forecast with any reliability. Some years we are blessed with many good burning days whereas other years we have relatively few. It is our intent to conduct prescribed burns on the openlands at Little Dixie in a rotation that gets each field burned within a 3-5 year window since the previous burn. Due to wind direction limitations and changing burn priorities throughout the district it can be difficult to keep up with the ideal rotations.

Aquatic Resource Management

Concern with lack of good fish cover.

Fish cover has been added to the lake annually for over 20 years and will continue to be added annually.

Concern about too many grass carp. Suggests removing carp during electroshocking surveys.

Mature grass carp are difficult to capture with electroshocking equipment. When adults are captured they are often removed.

Suggests adding strategies to increase the size of crappie in Little Dixie Lake.

Previous attempts to manage crappie in the lake resulted in poorer quality largemouth bass, bluegill, redear sunfish and catfish growth and angling success. Approximately 50% of the crappie in the lake are harvested annually and we feel with that amount of pressure on the species we cannot implement strategies for increasing crappie size without compromising the largemouth bass, bluegill, redear sunfish and catfish populations.

Suggests removing undesirable aquatic vegetation along shorelines.

We do assess and monitor the aquatic vegetation growth in the lake annually. Both herbicides and grass carp are used to help keep the vegetation at desirable levels. Having some vegetation is necessary for the lake to support the fish population present.

Public Use Management

Suggests limiting all motorized boats to “no-wake speed only.”

The current regulations for the area indicate that all boats are to be operated at no-wake speeds.

Supports exploration of a new boat ramp. Suggests building new ramp close to existing boat dock.

We have proposed to relocate the ramp and the proposal has been accepted. The project is currently in the engineering stage of planning and we expect to have the new ramp in place before the year 2020.

Suggests finding a way to inform the public when the current boat ramp is unusable due to low water levels. This information could be included in the weekly fishing report.

This is a good suggestion and we will try to incorporate this into the weekly fishing report and also on our online Atlas Database that many people use to get information about Conservation Areas.

Suggests allowing night fishing, even if only a few times a year.

Due to the close proximity of private residences we prefer to keep the area closed from 10 PM – 4 AM. Note that the vast majority of other Conservation Areas open to fishing do not have closed hours for fishing and hunting activities.

Suggests labeling ponds on area map as fishless or fishable. Curious which pond is the General Lee Pond.

We will label the General Lee Pond on our next map revision. The General Lee Pond is the pond due south of the northernmost parking lot on County Road 230.

Suggests updating public use data to more accurately determine area fishing pressure.

We are unclear as to what benefit this would provide. We know that on nice days at certain times of the year the lake can be extremely busy and at other times it can be deserted.

Suggests allowing camping. Suggests allowing primitive camping at north end of property.

There are 2 parking lots on the area that are potentially suitable for primitive camping. Primitive camping has been allowed on occasion via a Special Use Permit granted to individuals or small

groups on a case by case basis. The Cedar Creek District of the nearby Mark Twain National Forest has several campgrounds available.

Concern with poorly maintained privies. Suggests more frequent cleaning of these facilities. Contract this work out if needed.

We do try to keep up with the cleaning and maintenance of the privies and we do realize that they still sometimes appear less than ideal. We also have increased the amount of contracting that we do with grass mowing and trash pickup so that we have more staff time to devote to privy maintenance. We will try to do better in this area.

Suggests more frequent mowing of Shoreline Trail and for brush to be trimmed along the trail. Suggests wood chipping the trails, if not paving.

We recognize that the trail almost always has some needs and we have learned that it nearly always will. Our local work team does not have the time or labor to be able to keep this trail in a good condition for all weather conditions. We would welcome any assistance from interested volunteers.

Suggests adding a bird feeder on the east side (near the paved trail).

This would be best accomplished through a cooperative agreement with an interested area user or neighbor whereby we provide a feeder and some seed and they assumed the responsibility for maintaining it.

Concern that some figures in plan show the Boundary Trail as multi-use (hiking and biking) and the Shoreline Trail as hiking only. Other figures show the opposite.

We will check posted area signage, the Atlas Database and our brochure for accuracy in all 3 locations.

Administrative Considerations

Suggests adding a restaurant or allowing a concessionaire to sell food.

We have thought about the potential of having a concessionaire to sell fishing bait and lures, take care of the rental boats and generally provide some oversight for area users and their questions or comments about the area. To our best knowledge there just is not enough “profitability” there to keep a vendor busy and satisfied. Vendor systems like this have been shown to work at a few larger conservation areas in the state and we are not opposed to having one here on the area – we just don’t think the volume of business potential is great enough to attract anyone. There is a convenience store that sells food and some fishing tackle and bait right across the street from Little Dixie Conservation Area.

Suggests allowing citizens to adopt a spot (entrance to boat ramp) to grow wildflowers.

This could be allowed via Special Use Permit and/or a Volunteer Agreement. Please inquire with the area manager.

General support for the management of Little Dixie Lake Conservation Area and the beauty of the area.

Thank You!

References:

Missouri Department of Conservation. (2009). *Watershed and stream management guidelines for lands and waters managed by Missouri Department of Conservation*. Jefferson City, Missouri: Missouri Department of Conservation.

Nigh, T.A., & Schroeder, W.A.. (2002). *Atlas of Missouri ecoregions*. Jefferson City, Missouri: Missouri Department of Conservation.

Stuckey, N. (1997). Fisheries guidelines for stream side management zones: Guidelines for recommending stream side management zones on private land. Missouri Department of Conservation.

Maps:

Figure 1: Area Map

Figure 2: Topographic Map

Figure 3: Current Infrastructure – North

Figure 4: Current Infrastructure – Middle

Figure 5: Current Infrastructure – South

Figure 6: Landcover Type

Additional Appendices:

Appendix A: Draft Little Dixie Lake Conservation Area Management Plan Public Comments

Figure 1: Area Map

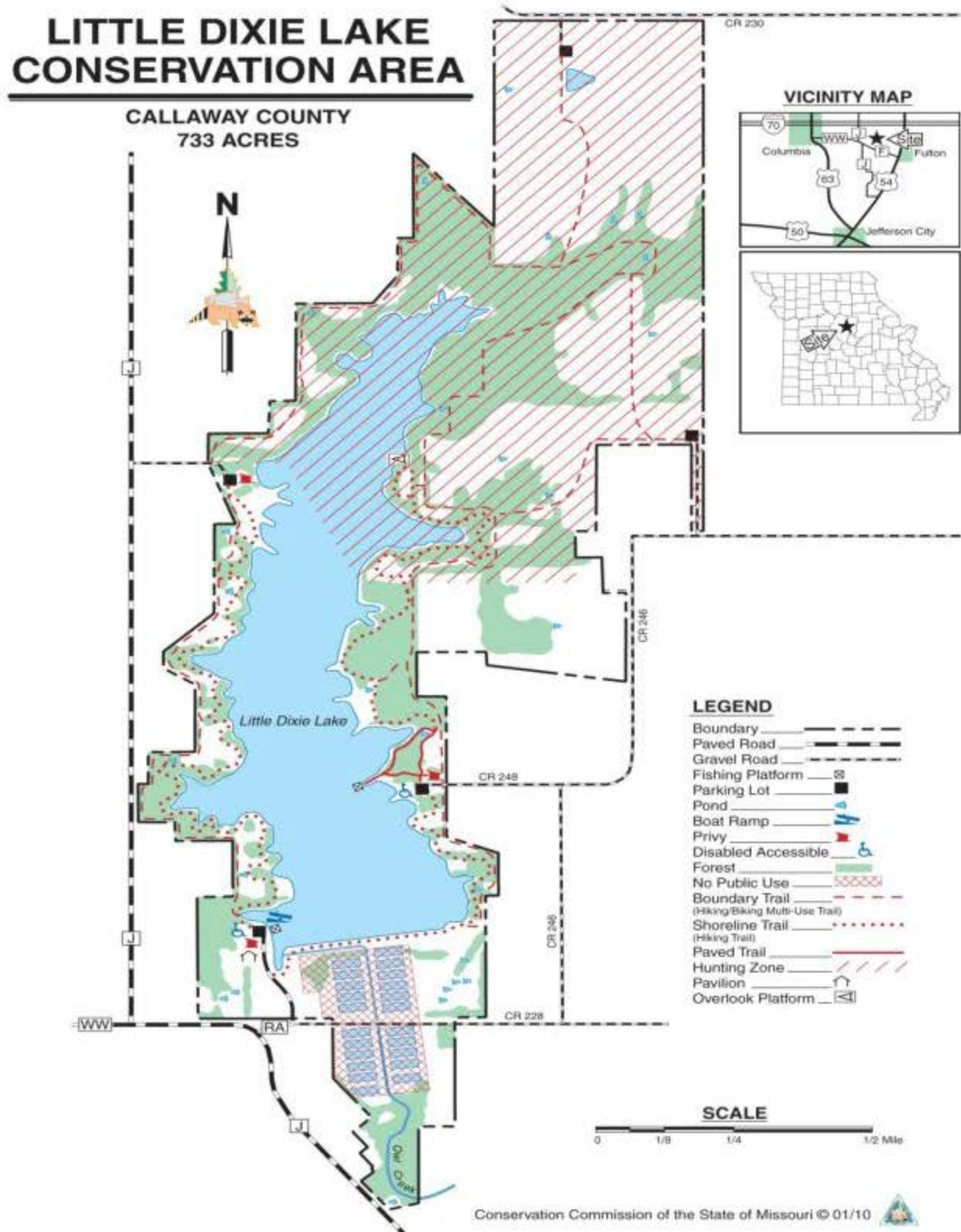


Figure 2: Topographic Map

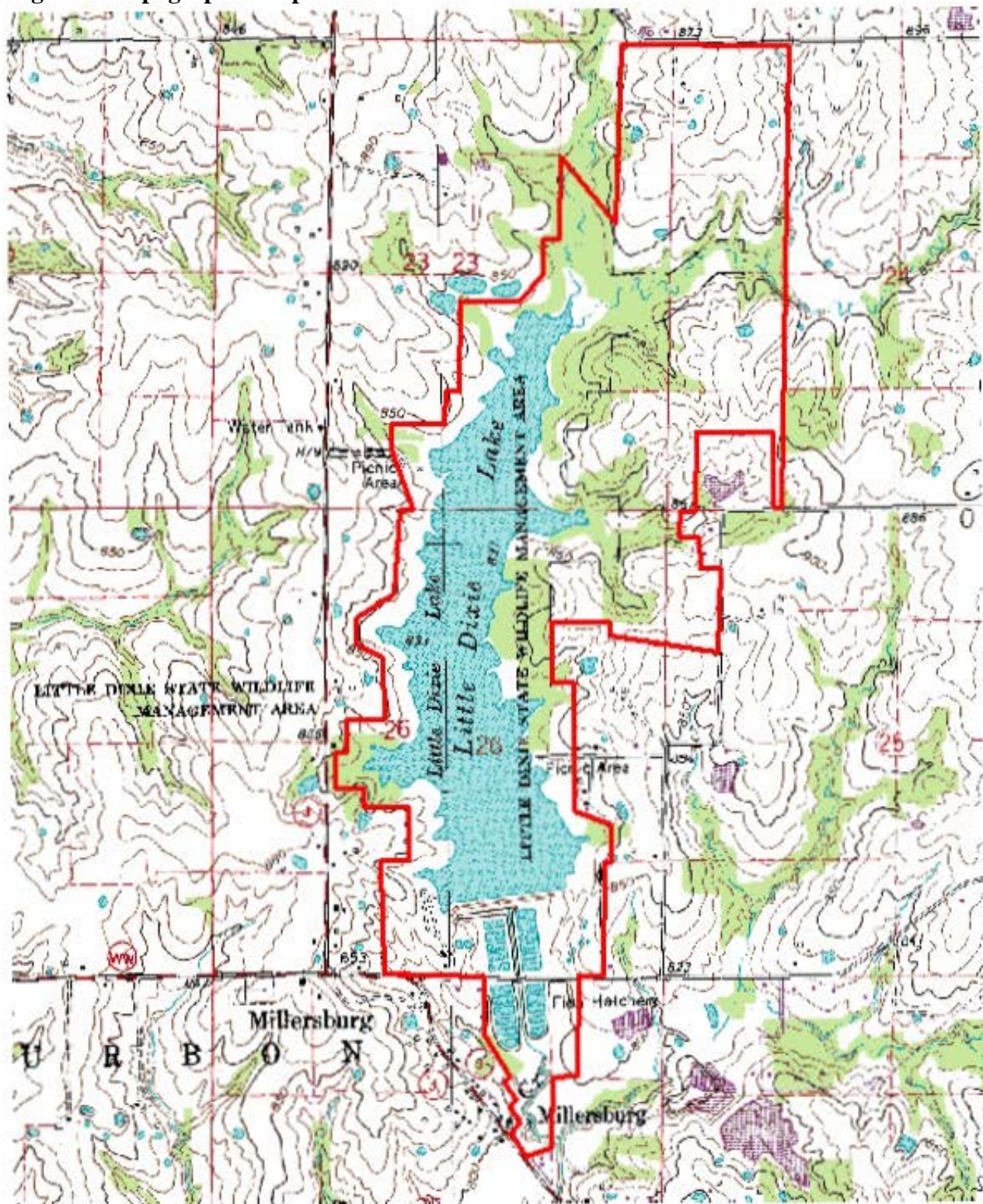


Figure 3: Current Infrastructure – North

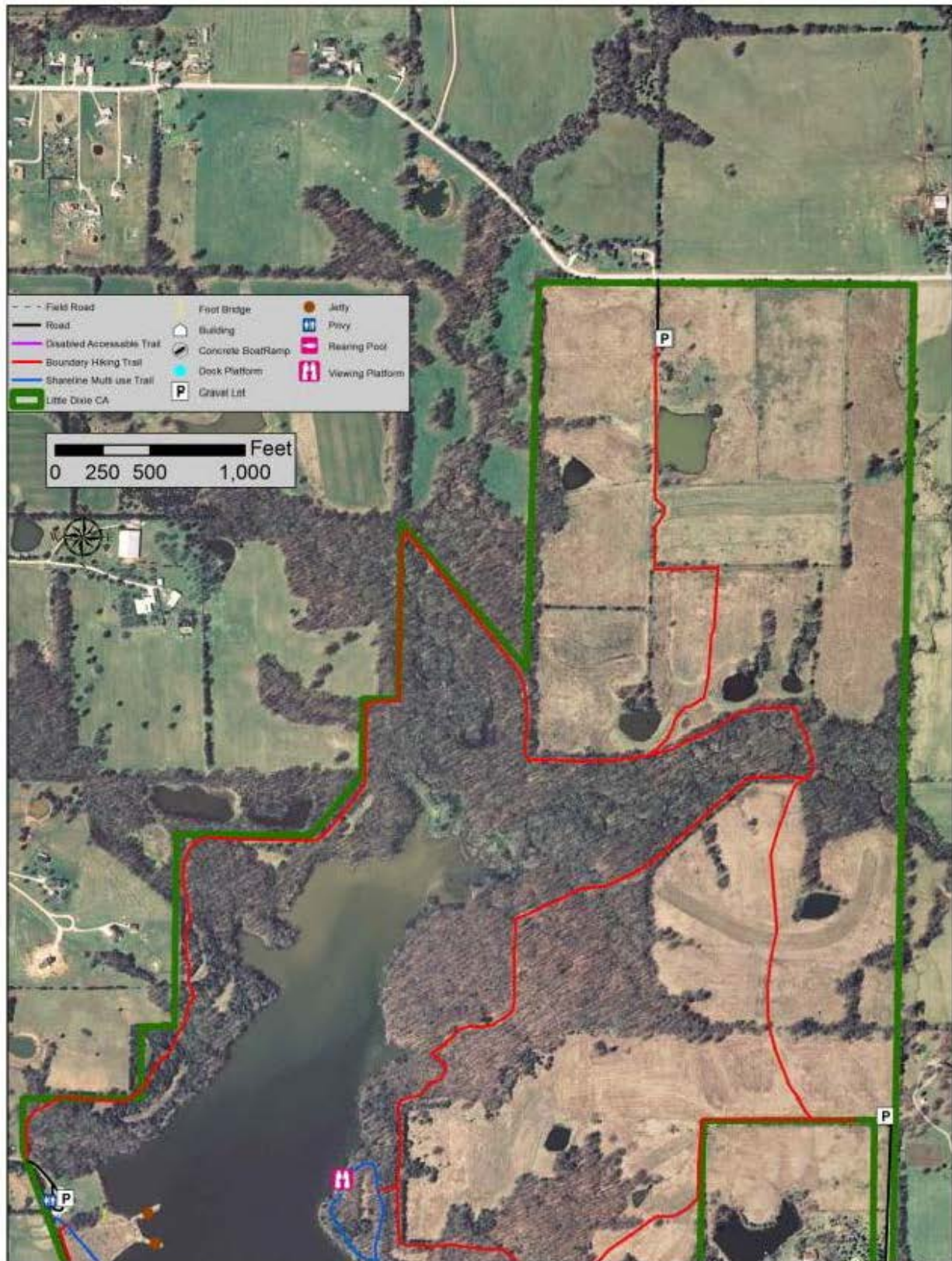


Figure 4: Current Infrastructure - Middle

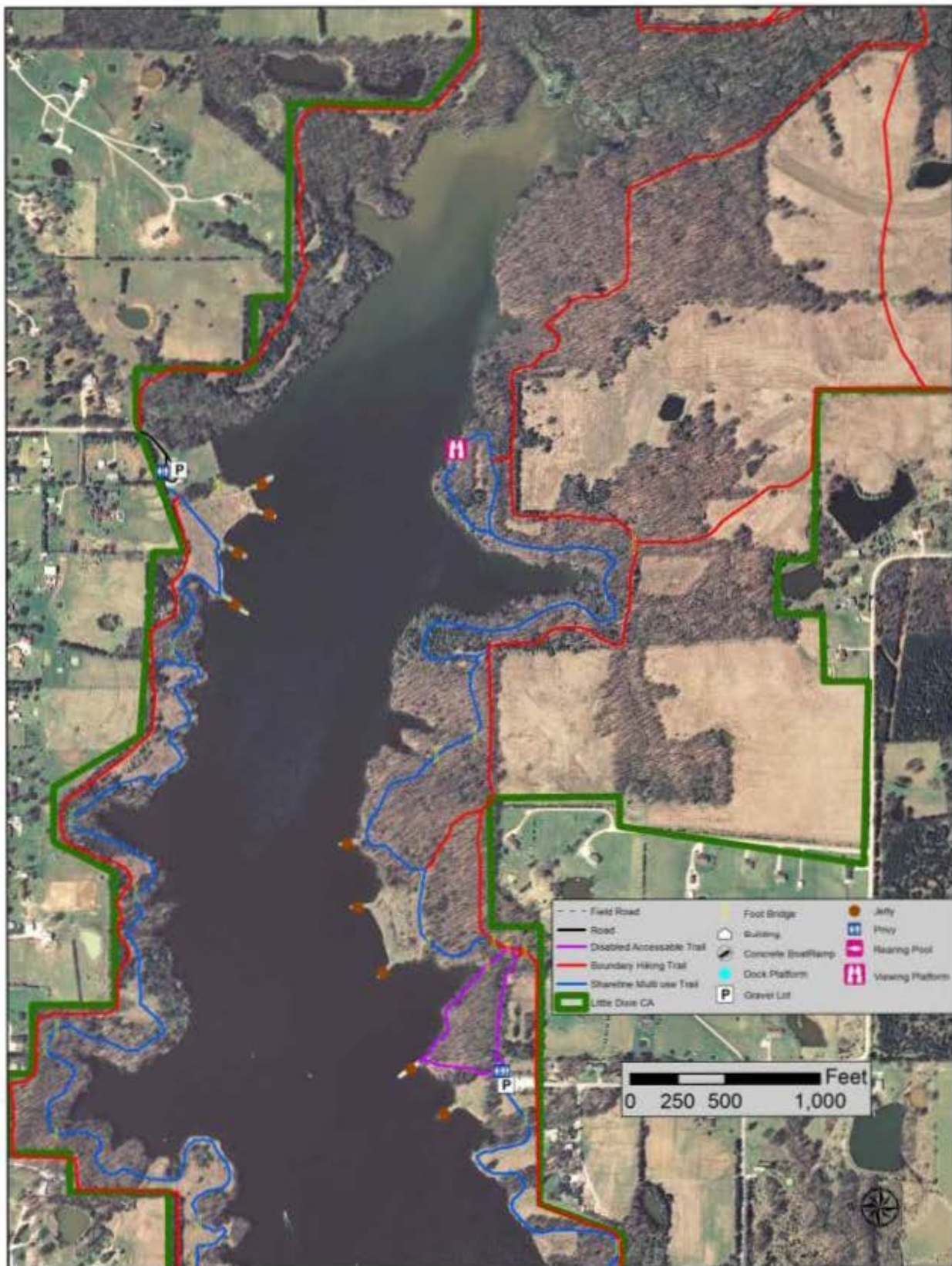


Figure 5: Current Infrastructure - South

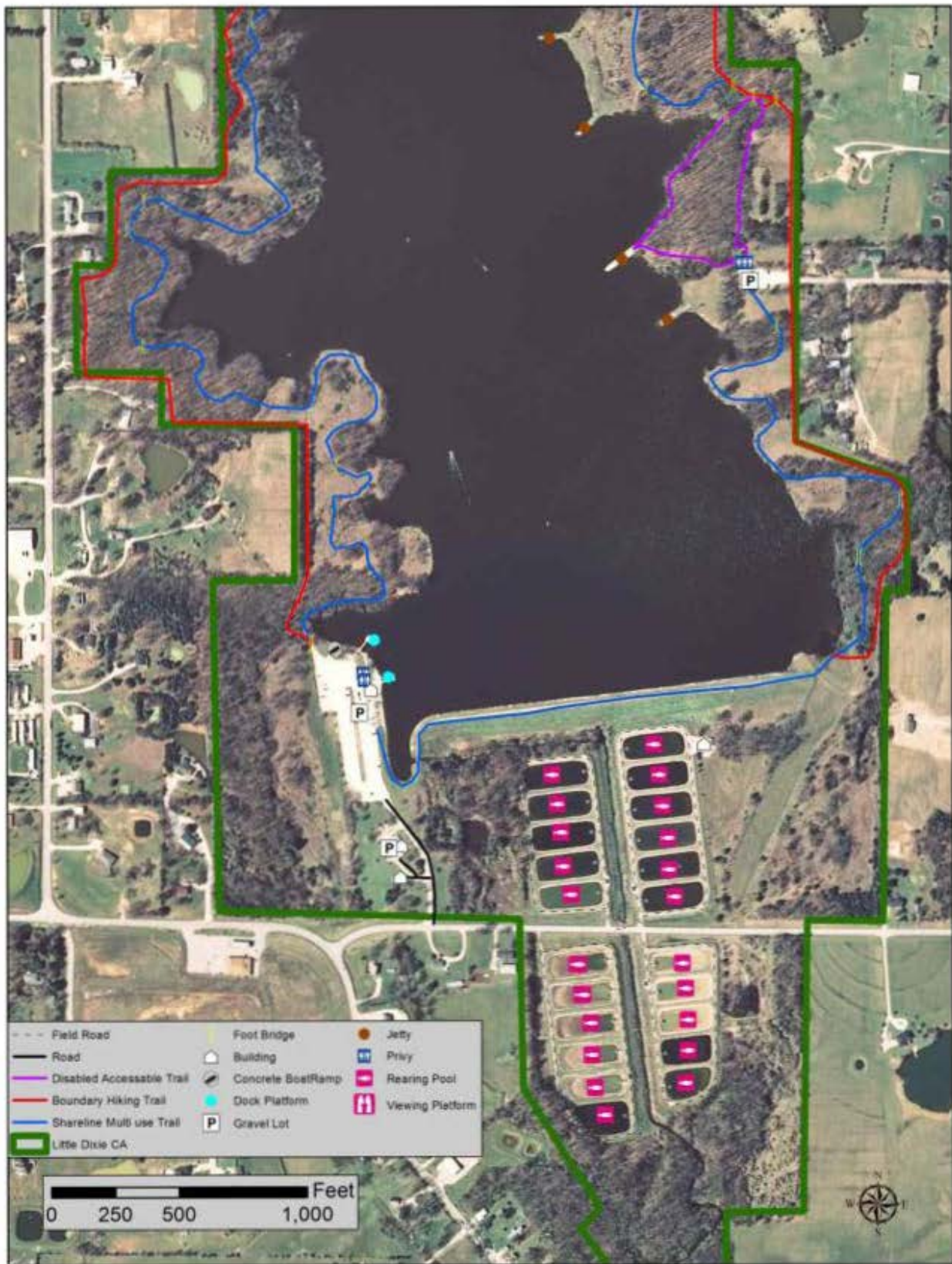
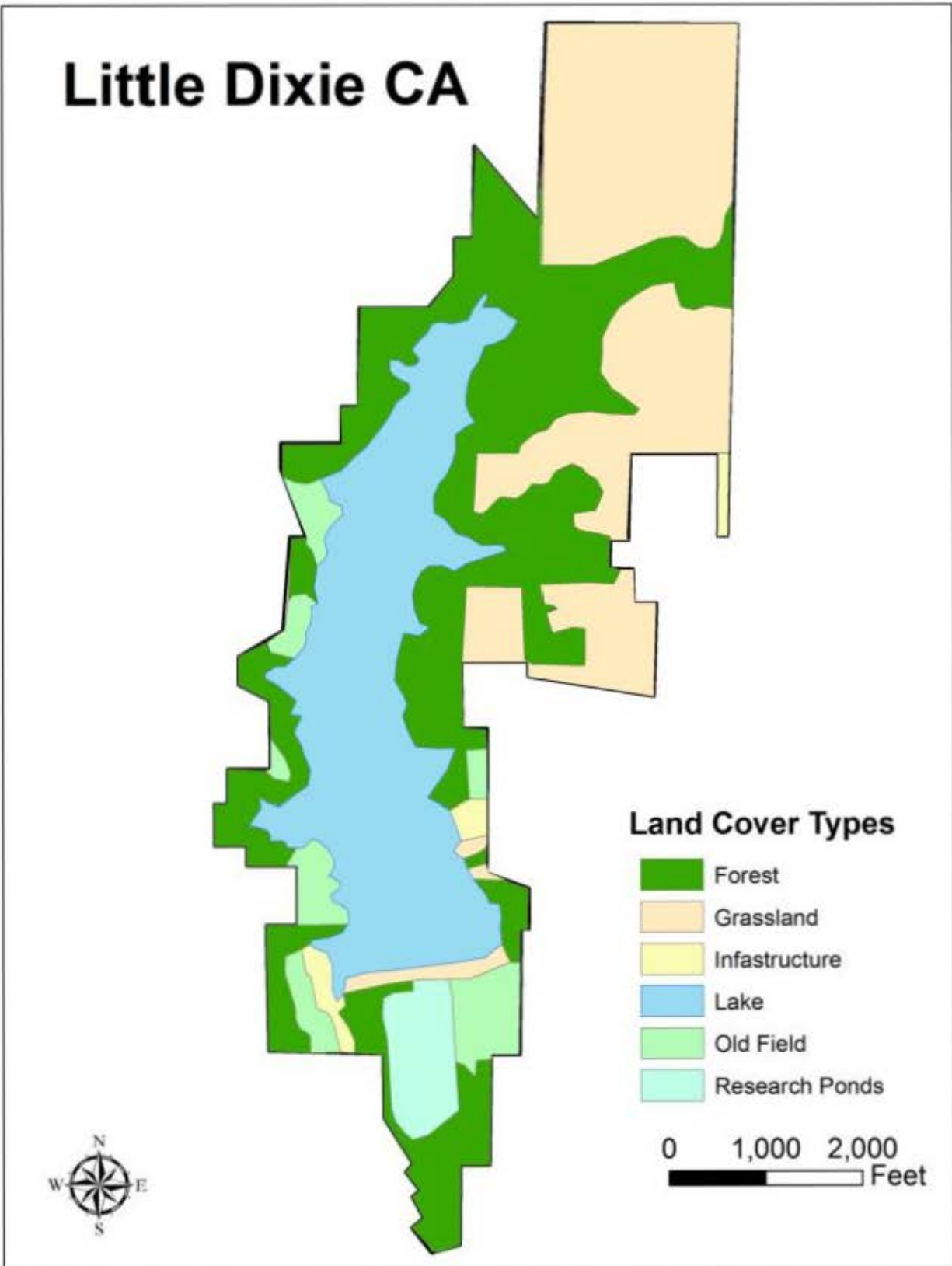


Figure 6: Landcover Type



Appendix A. Draft Little Dixie Lake Conservation Area Management Plan Public Comments

Received during public comment period (February 1-28, 2015)

I am not familiar with the land so have no specific comments about your management plans. We do appreciate and support your work in all areas of conservation. Several times a year we visit conservation areas. Sometimes we just drive through looking for wildlife. Other times we hike if there is a trail. We enjoy these times and are very proud of all our conservation department does for our state and its citizens.

Put up a restaurant, or make facilities available for private management.

Request considering limiting motorized boats to "no-wake speed only" regardless of horsepower allowed. Last summer, I witnessed certain small horsepower gas engine operators throttling at full speed in horseplay zig-zag pattern (two boats). The result was waves that disrupted fishing and struck the shoreline disrupting natural vegetation. Thank you for all you do for us.

Very happy to see the exploration of a new boat ramp - the current ramp is problematic for the reasons mentioned in the draft. The one benefit it has is being fairly well shielded from some of the winds that can blow through outside that small protected cove. If a ramp could be built close to the existing boat dock, this would simply launching by providing a place to tie off the boat (particularly beneficial for those who are launching solo).

It would be great if some night fishing was allowed rather than closing overnight - even if just a few weekends out of the year. Camping also likely adds a lot of unneeded complications, but it would be nice to be able to camp at that facility. The only other real camping availability near Columbia, MO, is Finger Lakes (that I am aware of) but the ATV traffic makes that a bit less attractive.

I am a fairly recent graduate from the Fisheries and Wildlife program at Mizzou and I enjoy Little Dixie for the most part. My biggest disappointment in the area is the lack of good fish cover in the large lake. I understand that the majority of people fishing out there don't want brush piles along the bank because it causes them to get "hung up", however, the fish need that cover to thrive. It is a delicate balance between maintaining a good public image and providing wildlife with the habitat that they need, so I understand the conflict. On another note: I think that the smaller ponds on the property could be labeled on the area map as to whether they are amphibian ponds or ponds with fish in them. I spent a full day last year jumping from one pond to the next trying to figure out which ones had fish and which did not. Overall you guys are doing a great job so keep up the good work!

I usually quail hunt the Little Dixie Area once or twice a year, although this year I didn't get a chance. The northern part of the area used to have a food plot or two of corn or milo, but have had none for a few years. I don't understand why on this area and other conservation areas it seems the conservation department doesn't food plots. Where there are food plots, especially milo, you can find quail. With disappearing quail numbers, it looks to me like they would want to

provide food and cover that would benefit the quail during harsher winters. The edge feathering might help with cover for a few years, but once the trees that are cut settle I don't think it will benefit the quail. The best thing would be to get rid of fescue and siereca lespedezia and start putting food plots back every year.

(Phone conversation): Commenter called to share stories of his time as the first area manager of Little Dixie Lake Conservation Area. He said it was always a special place. Neighbors always took pride in the area and a number of local people were helpful taking care of the area. He was well acquainted with many local anglers. He conducted his Master's thesis on the effects of size limit regulations on largemouth bass in an impoundment on the area (1970).

I spend many days each year fishing, traveling throughout central and southern MO. By far, the privies at Little Dixie are the most poorly maintained facilities I have ever seen. I have visited several Forest Service facilities, in similar situations where no running water exists to hose them down, and yet they are kept in a clean condition. There is zero excuse for a facility so easy for cleaning staff to access, with so many visitors, being left with feces on the floor. I see feces approximately 80% of the time I am forced to visit the privy. Leaving one person's mess leads to more people creating a mess, similar to illegal dumping, because no one values it. Your plan MUST include changes to contractor or employees responsible for cleaning. Extend a water line if necessary. Do whatever it takes. No public facility should be left in such condition.

Other than the lack of maintenance, my recommendations would include changes to grass carp [fewer], and allowing primitive camping at the north end of the property. Too little aquatic vegetation occurs in the lake in my opinion. I would remove some of the carp during shocking surveys.

I would like to see more control of grasslands, less grass, more wildflowers, native to this area. I also pick up a lot of trash, on county roads, 228, 246, and 248. is there anyway I could get an adoption sign? also, maybe adopt a spot, like Columbia does, to grow wildflowers. like at the entrance of boat ramp. thanks

(Phone conversation): Commenter stated that the trail at Little Dixie is overgrown and he would like it mowed more often. He would also like the brush trimmed along the trail, which is about 1/4-1/3 of a mile long. He would like the trail to be paved but realizes that probably won't happen. He would like the trail to be wood chipped like they do at Runge. Mr. Gallatin, in addition to having the trail cleared out, would like it marked so it is easier to find his way around the lake to go fishing. He said he would like the other smaller trail with the little bridge to be cleared out and wood chipped as well.

Hard copy: I have fished many waters of the State of Missouri; my primary focus is on Crappie, Catfish (both pole and trotline), Walleye and other pan fish as well as non-game fish by pole and during gigging season. I have fished Little Dixie Lake once with excellent results for catching but not so good at keeper size. Just about every cast yielded a fish but they were almost always about six inches or less.

Although one time fishing is by no means a good scientific sample I talked with other anglers

and they were all having similar results. I would like to see something in your management plans to address increasing the size of crappie in Little Dixie.
Thanks.

February 7, 2015

Dear MDC

I have lived around Little Dixie Lake all my life. (I'm 67 years old). I was South of it when it was built, then I moved to West side, it ran along my East fence. Now I'm on the Northeast corner of it. It runs along my West fence.

My Dad (he had polio) used to fish in the fish ponds. My dad caught the biggest fish that was caught in the lake at that time. (I think was April of '75)

I can hear my Mother tell the story, "Jim said I had to show Lewis, Owl Creek." Mom was about to whip us, but she had some other ladies tell her not whip us.

I used to ride my bicycle around it. Now that I've had a stroke, I just drive around the main parking lot, and spend a lot of my time just looking at birds and walking the handicapped trail around the east side. I was wondering would it be asking too much if you put a bird feeder. It wouldn't have to be anything fancy but I was wondering could you just something over at the east side.

Thank you for keeping Little Dixie in great condition. As a neighbor of the Conservation Area, we are privileged to enjoy its beauty every day. We frequently hike the trails, fish from the banks, canoe the water, picnic on the shore, and observe the many animals and birds. Little Dixie is our backyard. I'm not sure how I can convey to you what it means to me. Not only is it a beautiful place, where I find serenity and peace, it is filled with many happy memories for me. When my husband and I first started dating, we hiked many miles together at Little Dixie. It is where I discovered that he shared my love of the outdoors, and I also learned how much he respected and appreciated what it means to have Little Dixie and other Conservation Areas in our great state. I fell in love with my husband in the woods of Little Dixie and, lucky for me, it's where he proposed. We were married in a small ceremony under the beautiful trees at the lake's edge. I want to grow old in these woods, by this water, in this beautiful place. But it's not about our story. It's about the fact that we were able to make a story here, that we are one of many, many stories from countless people who visit Little Dixie. Please continue to support and care for Little Dixie and other Conservation Areas, so that future generations have the opportunity to make their own stories.

This is a great fishing resource to have so close to a large number of anglers, and it gets a tremendous amount of public use. I have two suggestions that would benefit users.

1. The privies need much more frequent attention. I have seldom been there and found the privies were anything except a mess, even close to weekend and holidays. If existing staff cannot check and clean more often, perhaps someone local can be paid as temporary labor to

clean more often. As a an MDC retiree, I find it really frustrating to think the agency cannot do a better job with something so visible to the public.

2. I'm glad to see there is a strategy for improving the boat ramp situation. But as long as the existing ramp must be used, is there a way that the public could be informed when the ramp is unusable due to low water levels? It's a shame to pull a boat all the way to the lake only to find the ramp unusable because of low water level. Someone takes time to make a weekly fishing report, April-October; couldn't that person also mention in the report when the water level gets too low to launch the average-size fishing boat?

Thanks for considering these comments.

It was a good idea to distribute fliers to neighbors encouraging comments on the plan. The plan appears to stay the course of past years' management.

Please continue to attempt control of *Sericea lespedeza* on conservation property, and we will continue to do the same on ours.

Some confusion has been generated: Fig. 1 legend shows the Boundary Trail as multi-use (hiking and biking), and the Shoreline Trail as hiking only. The legends for Figures 3, 4, and 5 indicate that the Boundary Trail is hiking only, and the Shoreline Trail is multi-use. I think Figure 1 is the current situation. Are you flipping the trail users? I'd be glad to bike the Shoreline Trail, but I think you'll get more resource damage since it has many low spots, intermittent streams. It would be best to leave the bikers on the Boundary Trail, even though it doesn't have as many views of the lake.

We are always glad when you burn adjacent to our property. It makes burning our native grasses so much easier! When is the next burn planned north of CR 246 parking lot?

When do you plan to collect more current public use data? Is the most recent angler data really from 1991? Is it only anecdotal that "the lake continues to receive heavy fishing pressure"?

Which pond is the one you call General Lee pond?

We appreciate the cooperation with MDC managers regarding burns and *sericea* control in the past. Sadly, I don't think we'll ever win the *sericea* war. Good luck with your management planning.

I noticed not much priority has been given to removing undesirable vegetation. I have not fished in Little Dixie lake for 2 seasons, because the last time I was there the aquatic vegetation was growing along most of the shoreline and extended out as much as 20-30 ft. Because of this it was impossible to fish the shoreline or structures near the shoreline. I think it is good to have desirable species of aquatic vegetation along the shoreline for habitat, but it shouldn't be so prevalent that it prevents the public from using the lake. A priority should be put on removal of undesirable vegetation.